2013

Dear Student

Important Information for <mark>Students</mark> from one of the five Universities below about the new occupational therapy student competency website:
Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (OTCA) otca.net.au

The otca.net.au website is an innovative new website to support the development of and evidencing of student competence. It has been developed by five Australian partner universities, led by The University of Newcastle, with partners La Trobe University, James Cook University, the University of Western Sydney and Charles Sturt University.

This year, your university is trialing this new website.

The Australian Minimum Competency Standards for Graduate Occupational Therapists (ACSOT) was published in 2010 by Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA), and National Registration of occupational therapists was introduced in 2012. Prior to this, competency was presumed at the end of an accredited academic program, as there was no national framework for evidencing the competence of graduates. In 2010, an Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant was awarded to the University of Newcastle and the four partner universities to develop a framework to help develop and evidence students' graduating competence.

In 2011, ten focus groups of students and practice educators were held in the five partner universities as part of this grant and discussions were held with Heads of School of universities with occupational therapy programs and Heads of Practice Education. Results: Students and practice educators requested a range of resources to assist them in interpreting the broad competencies into practice skills and guidance on acceptable evidence. They also requested a framework for gauging their development and understanding practice.

An interactive website with a range of resources has been developed which students can use to support their competence development; and record, track and evidence their competence. It will be helpful in your professional development and for life-long learning.

As a result, the project team has developed four key tools for the website to help students, including the:

1. **Three Competency Development Levels:** Emerging, Consolidating & Competent to Graduate – to help students, practice educators and lecturers gauge students' development.

2. **Occupational Therapy Practice Process** – a process to help students make sense of the general steps of practice. It identifies 7 steps of practice plus the centrally-placed Being a Professional section which is applicable at all times throughout the practice process. It also defines practice reasoning relevant to each step.

These two key tools above form the website framework against which the following competency evidencing mechanism (the Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM)) is built.

3. **Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM)** – a competency evidencing mechanism which students can use to self-assess, evidence and track their developing competence by ticking-off the achieved OTCEM practice competency statements against the appropriate **level** and **Occupational Therapy Practice Process step/s.** They can also upload their supporting evidence for their achieved competence or provide a description of their competence to their website ePortfolio which holds a summary of their developing competence. The OTCEM is also used as a competency assessment tool for practice educators to verify their students' competence by assessing and verifying a student's OTCEM and supporting evidence in their ePortfolio.

   The OTCEM is mapped to the Australian Minimum Competency Standards for New Graduate Occupational Therapists (ACSOT) 2010 (OTA), using the Performance Record for the Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists (PRACSOT) 2010 (OTA) performance criteria. The OTCEM is linked electronically within the website to an ePRACSOT which is automatically populated/ticked-off as a record of competence for graduation once the practice educator/s and/or lecturer/s have verified the student's self-assessed OTCEM in the website. This provides a thorough and trackable record of students' competence within their otca.net.au website ePortfolio.

4. **Practice Placement Cycle –** a term used within the website describing the website cycle used to help students by guiding them to prepare for practice and evidence their competence in a developmental and systematic way.
   There are 6 stages of this cycle**:**
   1. Prepare for Placement
   2. Writing Your Learning Objectives
   3. Resources to Develop Your Competencies
   4. Self-Assess Your Competencies
   5. Evidence Your Competencies and
   6. Your ePortfolio - which is where students: upload, record, track and store their supporting evidence of achieved competencies forming a summary of the students' competencies; and where students can reflect using the reflective diary in thinking about their practice placement and in preparing for their next practice placement. Students give their lecturers and practice educators access to selected evidence to assess and verify.

   Students can use the **Practice Placement Cycle** found on the website homepage to prepare for practice, write a letter of introduction to their Practice Educator, develop their learning contract and learning objectives, access the key tools and resources outlined above to help their development, use the OTCEM to evidence their competence and upload supporting evidence to their website ePortfolio and to reflect.

Website Resources
The website also contains useful resources for students, including a range of videos, documents, quizzes and web links to support competency development. These resources are arranged within the relevant steps of the Occupational Therapy Practice Process on the website. These resources are also useful to practice educators and lecturers in helping guide students' competency development.

Also attached is an otca.net.au Fact Sheet with a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), including information on how to:
- Access the Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (OTCA) website: otca.net.au
- Register in the OTCA website
- Self-assess your competence in the website.

You can access the website now at otca.net.au to see the website resources and register to develop your learning contract and learning objective, use the OTCEM competency evidencing mechanism and ePortfolio.

You can also watch a 'Captivate' video about using the website, located from the **help (?)** section on the website homepage once you have registered and logged in at: otca.net.au

Primarily, students will manage their ePortfolio. Practice Educators will also have a role – to assist students by verifying the students' competencies in the OTCEM within the otca website, and their supporting evidence in their website ePortfolio. This will be most beneficial to you as a student if your practice educator engages with the website to do this.

Please read the Fact Sheet 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ) below, but also discuss this new website and the OTCEM with your practice educator.

You can also contact your university lecturer or us at the University of Newcastle at:

Caroline.hills@newcastle.edu.au
Catherine.studdert@newcastle.edu.au

Regards

The University of Newcastle (UoN) Project Team:
Susan Ryan, Carol Hills, Kim Nguyen, Catherine Studdert and Paul Sijpkes
Partners:
Carol McKinstry, Lee Zakrewski, Matthew Yau and Michael Curtin

Frequently Asked Questions About the:
Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (otca) Website &
Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM)

What is the otca Website?

The Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (otca) Website otca.net.au is a student-focused website with an ePortfolio for students based on the 2010 Australian Minimum Competency Standards for Graduate Occupational Therapists (OTA, 2010). It contains a range of resources, such as videos, quizzes, documents and web links for students and educators about competence and practice. The site is based on each practice placement, with each complete placement being called a 'Practice Placement Cycle'. The OTCEM contains a range of competency statements at three competency development levels: Emerging, Consolidating and Competent to Graduate, defining competence for both students and their practice educators.

What does the OTCEM do?

The OTCEM is an otca website tool providing a method of defining a student's competence. At the beginning of the placement it can be used to help guide students when setting their Learning Objectives. Educators may use the OTCEM to review achievements and set further Learning Objectives weekly or at regular times throughout the placement. It can be used to give specific feedback on competencies attained, at both halfway (formative) and the end of the placement (summative).

What is the minimum use of the OTCEM?

Students should use the otca.net.au website in preparation for and during practice placement as instructed by your university, and use the OTCEM to evidence competence achieved. Ideally, practice educators would use the OTCEM at least twice during placement to verify students' competence – halfway (formative) and at the end of placement (summative), but at the minimum at the end of the placement.

Does it replace the SPEF-R?

No, the SPEF-R must be completed at halfway and at the end of the placement. But if you complete the OTCEM, it should assist in defining the feedback to the student on the SPEF-R.

How does the student use the OTCEM?

Once registered with the otca.net.au website, students will be using the OTCEM to record their competence and build an ePortfolio of supporting evidence to evidence their competence. Evidence can be hard evidence uploaded to the your ePortfolio, such as documents as agreed by your university, or in the form of a written description also uploaded to your ePortfolio. One main source of evidence is practice educators' observation of students' competency attainment in placement, ie: observed behaviour. Students will self-assess their competence by 'ticking' the OTCEM competency statements which they consider they have achieved. The student then asks their practice placement educator, to verify this self-assessment of their competence. The website OTCEM provides helpful Observed Behaviours against each competency statement to help practice educators when assessing the student. Students can also write narratives (case stories) or reflections on their competency development. Students may ask practice educators to verify these as 'true' accounts or may submit these to the University for marking.

Please Note: Students are not permitted to use any confidential client information or client-related documents as evidence.

A student will be able to view different stages of evidenced competence in their ePortfolio providing a complete record. The practice educator and lecturer can see these too, once shared by the student.
A colour-coding system has been used to help you:

- **Blue** – Evidenced and awaiting practice educator verification
  Once a student ticks off the OTCEM competency statements they have achieved and uploaded supporting evidence (either hard evidence or a description of how they achieved the particular competence) the competence pending verification will show in blue in their ePortfolio

- **Yellow** – Assessed and verified by the practice educator
  Once the practice educator has assessed and verified the student's ticked OTCEM competency statements and supporting evidence, it will show as yellow in the student's ePortfolio

- **Purple** – Previously assessed and verified competence
  All previously assessed OTCEM competence will show as purple in the student's ePortfolio.

What are the levels of competency on the OTCEM?

There are three Competency Development Levels in the OTCEM:
- **Emerging**
- **Consolidating**
- **Competent to Graduate**

Each OTCEM competency statement reflects the competency level, so students need to determine which level they are working at and the practice educators just have to decide which competency statement best represents the observed practice of the student. These levels are used throughout the otca website.

Can students have different competency development levels for different aspects of practice?

Yes, a student may have attained a combination of Emerging, Consolidating and Competent to Graduate on the OTCEM at the end of the placement.

Do your practice educators have to tick every box in the OTCEM?

No, practice educators only verify the OTCEM competency statements that the student has self-assessed by ticking. If they Agree with the student's ticked competency statement(s), the practice educator does not need to click anything, however, if you they **do not** agree, they click Disagree. Practice educators verify the competency statements they consider the student has attained. They then leave brief overall feedback in the box provided to explain why they Agreed/Disagreed. This will provide positive feedback, and areas of lower competence will help to focus students on their learning goals.

Please Note: Practice educators can also optionally tick competency statements that have not been ticked by the student if they feel that the student has attained that level and step for that competency statement or piece of evidence.

Once verified the competencies attained are automatically cross-checked in the ePRACSOT populating against the relevant PRACSOT performance criteria forming the student's record of competence.

What if there is more than one practice educator on a practice placement?

Each educator can verify evidence, such as case stories or narratives, and use the OTCEM to plan placement activities, but it is best if the practice educators discuss and agree on the student's competency achieved as shown on the OTCEM and one practice educator takes the lead on verifying the OTCEM.

How do practice educators verify students' competence in the OTCEM on the website?

They will need to register as a Practice Educator on the otca website.

Do I have to complete the OTCEM?

Students must begin to evidence their competency. This is to be done as instructed by your university. To benefit the students and fulfill requirements, it will also be most beneficial if practice educators start to use the OTCEM with their student/s.

How long are students allowed to work on evidencing competence on placement?

This is determined by your university and practice placement site.

Access to the internet is difficult at the placement site, what happens then?

The otca.net.au website provides students with the details of Wifi sites in their practice placement area so they can access the website in their own time, even if they are 'away' on placement. Students may also choose to use their own internet access and share this with educators if they wish them to verify evidence.

How do I verify the OTCEM via hard copy if I can't access the OTCA website?

In order for the website to work efficiently and record the student's competency attainment, the OTCEM needs to be completed on the website, which will then automatically populate/tick-off the corresponding ePRACSOT necessary to show students' competence to graduate.

However, if a practice educator cannot access the website, they can verify the student's competency attainment during and/or at the end of the placement by ticking or circling those competencies achieved on a hardcopy OTCEM and sign and date it. The student will then upload the hardcopy OTCEM to their ePortfolio and the university will verify it, based on the practice educator's signature.

How long does it take for practice educators to complete the OTCEM?

This is difficult to predict. Educators tell us it can take 1-2 hours to complete the SPEF-R. We predict it will take 30 minutes to complete the OTCEM as it is a simple tick box system, with a box to leave brief written feedback. Time taken will vary between educators.

How do students register on the otca.net.au website?

1. You can use either: Mozilla Firefox/Internet Explorer 8+/Google Chrome/Safari or Opera as your web browser. The site also works on iOS (iPhone, iPad etc.) and Android (e.g. Samsung Galaxy) devices.

NB: if you are using Internet Explorer as is used in HNEH, CSR and other institutions, please ensure that the browser is NOT running in Compatibility Mode.

To Turn Off Compatibility View for a Website in Internet Explorer
    A) Click/tap on the highlighted (blue) Compatibility View icon button. (See right)
    NOTE: *The webpage will now reload with Compatibility View turned off for it*.

2. Enter otca.net.au in the web browser search bar or Google: Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia.

3. On the top right hand corner of the OTCA website homepage is the registration link.

4. Click on this, you may get a security message that asks if you want to load insecure items, if so click "Yes".

5. Fill in your details. **It is very important that you use your official student email address**.

5. You will then receive a verification email with a link – click on the link or paste it into your browser.

6. This will return you to the OTCA website, you will get a message to the effect that your registration was successful. Now click on "Log in" in the top right hand corner of the homepage.

7. To self-assess your competence and upload supporting evidence, access the OTCEM via the homepage Practice Placement Cycle or via the toolbar.
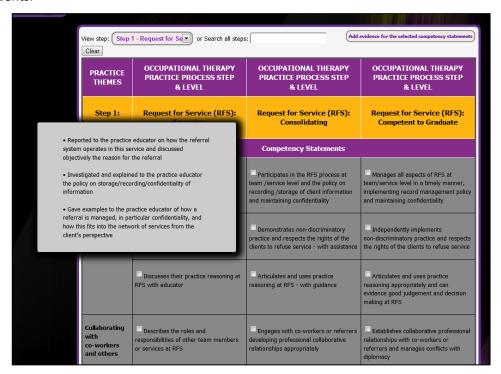   The OTCEM shows a step per page. The step can be changed via the drop down menu. It will initially default to Being a Professional. Each step contains competency statements (with tick boxes) for each level: Emerging, Consolidating and Competent to Graduate arranged in practice themes as seen in the left hand column. The student ticks the achieved competency statement/s against the appropriate level.

8. The OTCEM competency statements are mapped to the relevant 2010 PRACSOT performance criteria – click on the PRACSOT link for reference.
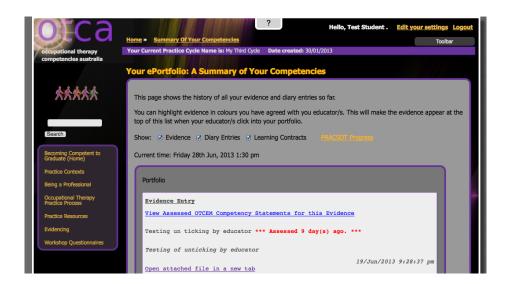

9. Students can also click on the Observed Behaviours relevant to each competency statement to see what types of things they should be doing to be competent in that area of practice. Practice educators can also use this to assess their students.
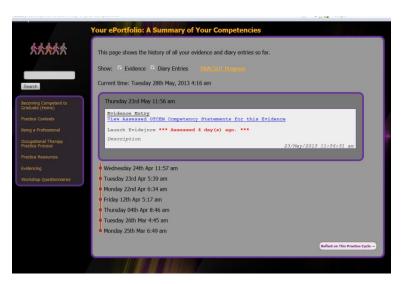
10. Students then upload supporting evidence to their ePortfolio – either uploading a hard piece of evidence or a by writing a description of how they achieved that competency statement.

11. **Then advise your Practice Educator your self-assessed competencies and supporting evidence are ready to be verified in your otca.net.au ePortfolio.**

12. Students can then access their assessed/verified OTCEM in their ePortfolio via the Toolbar : "Your ePortfolio". Select the relevant date.

13. Open the relevant assessed/verified OTCEM ePortfolio competency statement and supporting evidence entry. This will show in blue.

14. You will see your assess/verified OTCEM for that entry. The currently assessed entries will be in yellow with feedback at the top.

For Your Information:

Information for you about how Practice Educators verify students' competency and evidence using the otca.net.au website:

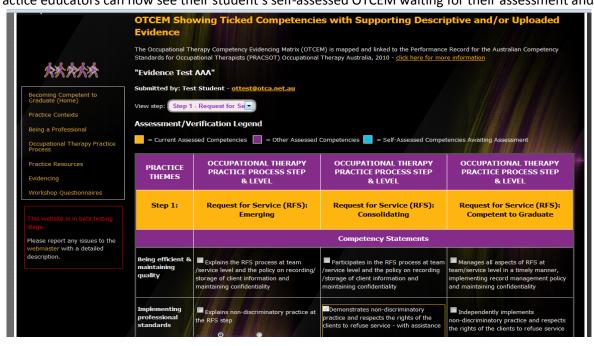1. After logging in, practice educators click on the yellow "For Educators" button.

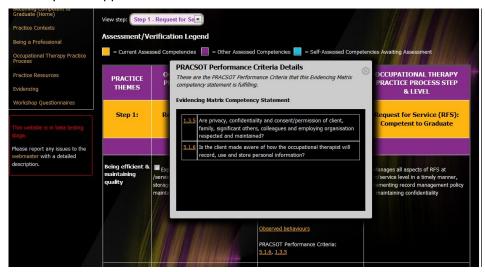2. Then click the student they wish to assess and verify.

3. They click "Assess Matrix Competency for this Evidence" on the student's timeline to view and verify their OTCEM self-assessment, supporting comment or piece of evidence.
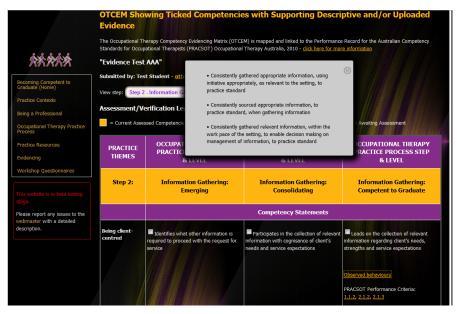

4. Practice educators can now see their student's self-assessed OTCEM waiting for their assessment and verification.
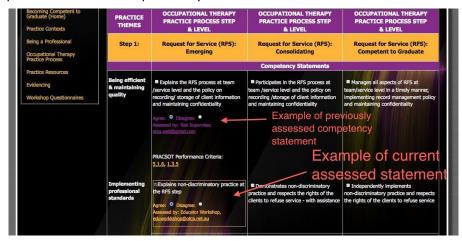
5. Practice educators can also refer to the competency statement relevant 2010 PRACSOT performance criteria to which they are mapped – click on these for reference.
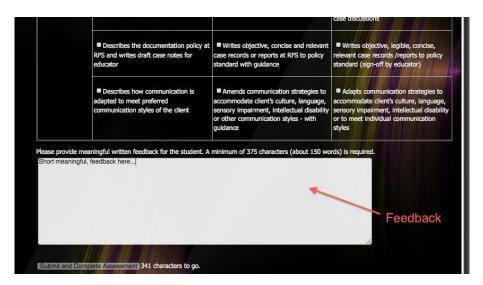

6. They can also click on the Observed Behaviours relevant to each competency statement to help guide their assessment of students.

7. Practice educators click 'Disagree' if they disagree with any of the student's self-assessments in the matrix. Blue indicates competencies submitted by the student and waiting to be assessed, yellow indicates those currently assessed and purple indicates evidence previously assessed.

8. Practice educators provide some concise, meaningful feedback on why they Agreed or Disagreed with any competency statements that the student had ticked.

9. Once practice educators have provided feedback, they **click the 'Submit and Complete Assessment' button** below the feedback box and log out.

    The relevant verification and feedback can then be viewed in the students' ePortfolio.

How do I let the university know what I think of the OTCEM?

We will undertake formal evaluation of this trial and a focus group of students is planned for later in 2013. If you wish to know more about this and participate please advise your university lecturer or contact:
Catherine.studdert@newcastle.edu.au
Your participation would be very much appreciated.

Alternatively, email: caroline.hills@newcastle.edu.au with both questions and/or comments on the OTCEM.

What does the otca.net.au website provide?

The website holds a range of resources for students and educators to support students' competency development.